

FW 4.28:IL 6/3/wiu/c.1

DOCUMENTS LIBRARY
WESTERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY
MACOMB, ILLINOIS

Illinois
**HISTORICAL
ANECDOTES**



ILLINOIS WRITERS' PROJECT
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

1987-1996

STX

C881

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL ANECDOTES CHICAGO, I



3 1711 00092 7546

F
541
.W75

WESTERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
MACOMB, ILLINOIS

SCT 6	85
JUL 28 '85	FEB 22 1985
MAY 12 '89	MAY 7 1982
MAR 3 '78	
FEB 11 '71	
MAY 1 '70	
OCT 27 1993	
GAYLORD	PRINTED IN U.S.A.

156

~~JUL 28 '86~~

~~APR 12 '69~~

~~MAR 3 1970~~

FEB 11 1971

MAN 1572

OCT 27 1993


FEB 22 1985

MAY 7 1932

GOV/LEGAL INFO

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
CARLI: Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

I L L I N O I S
H I S T O R I C A L A N E C D O T E S

Compiled by the
WORKERS OF THE WRITERS' PROGRAM
of the
WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION
in the State of Illinois

Official Sponsor: Division of Department Reports
State of Illinois

Cooperating Sponsor: Chicago Library Club

1 9 4 0
Chicago, Illinois

F
541
WTS

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY

John M. Carmody, Administrator

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

Howard O. Hunter, Acting Commissioner

Florence Kerr, Assistant Commissioner

Charles E. Miner, Administrator for Illinois

Evelyn S. Byron, Director Professional and Service Division

Robert I. McKeague, Chief Community Service Section

162155

LIBRARY
WESTERN ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY
MACOMB, ILLINOIS

41-52704

This collection of stories about Illinois has been selected from a large group of similar items that have been sent in past months to newspapers in the state as a part of the Project's information service. Editors and their readers have received them so cordially that a larger field of usefulness seemed to be open to them - supplementary reading for home study groups and schools.

Curtis D. Mac Dougall

State Supervisor

PART ONE

FROM GEYSERS TO OATS

GEYSERS IN ILLINOIS

THE flooding of a mine near Pinckneyville in 1880 caused a temporary phenomenon in the nature of a true geyser, probably the only occurrence of this kind in the recorded history of Illinois. An account of this event is given in a Pinckneyville newspaper of the time.

Flood waters on Beaucoup Creek had covered a tract of land above the coal mine of Bernhard Blume. A break in the roof of a part of the mine suddenly admitted the flood water in great volume, "for a short time almost diverting the current of the swollen creek, carrying away whole sections of the rail fence which stood near a bank of the creek, many of the rails as well as other timber and drift wood being caught in the maelstrom and whirled down the capacious throat of the gaping crevasse."

The sudden inrush of the water "compressed the air in an extraordinary degree, and the rebound was such that the descending flood was forced back as in the action of a geyser, and for several minutes time heaved skyward in vast quantities to the height of at least 100 feet." The upheaval of water, dirt, and drift was succeeded by a few minutes of quiet, during which the floods again poured down the funnel. The air was again compressed and again the geyser-like reaction occurred, higher than before. This process was twice more repeated before the mine had been entirely flooded.

All but one of the miners escaped before the break in the roof occurred. The Blume mine remained flooded for nearly 39 years. In 1918 the body of Joseph Neising, which had been preserved by the mineral-laden water, was finally recovered. It lay face down on the floor of his room and conditions indicated that he had his working place in order. A sack of tobacco and a small clay pipe, with a 'heel' of tobacco tightly tamped in it was found in the pockets."

HIGH ROAD TO WISDOM

DURING early days in Illinois, a person desiring to teach had only to find some paying pupils to begin school work. About 1818, one teacher announced the opening of a school in Kaskaskia, "for the instruction of youth in English Literature."

However, in the event that this subject was considered inadequate scholastic training, he offered to "extend the sphere of instruction so as to include the following sciences, viz: Reading, Writing, Orthography, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, History, Rhetoric Composition, Elocution, etc."

The teacher concluded by saying he "flatters himself that from his attention to the morals and scientific avocations of his pupils, he will share no inconsiderable portion of the patronage of the judicious and discerning people."

LAND OF "PLENTY TO EAT"

RICHNESS of the Illinois country in and around Sangamon County was known to the Indians long before the white men appeared, judging from the name they gave it. According to one historian, the Indian name was "Sangamo," meaning "the country where there is plenty to eat."

Volunteers in the War of 1812, saw the country for the first time when they marched through it to Peoria Lake, and soon after their return home the beauty and fertility of the area were often subjects of comment.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

EARLY POPULATION RECORDS

IN, 1800, a total of 2,458 persons lived in the area that 18 years later became the State of Illinois, according to an historian who has studied early census records. In 1810 the population was 12,282 and by 1820 it had soared to 55,162.

The distribution of population in 1800 was as follows: Fort Cahokia, 719; Bellefontaine, 236; south end of St. Clair County, 250; Kaskaskia, 467; Prairie du Rocher, 212; Mitchell's Settlement near Bellevue, 234; Fort Massac, 90; Peoria, 100, and the Illinois side of the Wabash River, about 110.

PIONEER PUBLIC LIBRARY

A VERY early, if not the first, collection of books for public use in Illinois was established in 1818 in Albion. The library was begun, it is said, by several lawyers, who fitted out one of the rooms in the market house and placed on the shelves their own books as well as some sent by friends and relatives in England.

Richard Flower, the guiding force behind the library in one of his letters gave an example of one pioneers' attitude toward books. A Captain, whom the writer described as "a sensible and intelligent backwoodsman," was paying Flower a visit, and upon seeing the lawyer's large private library remarked, "If I was to read half of them I would drive all the little sense in my head out of it."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

EDUCATION IN GOOD MANNERS

In the early days of Illinois when schools were private institutions, financed by parents who wished to educate their children, good manners were considered as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

In 1830 a subscription school in Montgomery County required each boy, upon entering the building, to make a bow, first to the teacher, and then to the rest of the school. A gentle and demure "curtsy" was expected from girl students. This was considered the first step in the making of a polished lady or gentlemen.

With the advent of free schools, the formalities of training in deportment, politeness, and courtesy was left in other hands. That the change, was mourned by many of the pioneers, becomes evident in a letter written in 1873 by a Hillsboro resident stating the writer's disappointment in the passing of an art, which "however simple the thing may have been, took time and practice to do it gracefully."

LA MOTTE -- ILLINOIS PIONEER

An almost legendary figure in the history of Crawford County, Illinois, is the Frenchman, La Motte. Tradition has it that when the first French settlers came to the region, La Motte was already established there, probably as a fur trader, and the only white man in the area. Other than this, little seems to be known of his life.

A fort, a creek, a prairie, a township, and a school were named after him.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

BATH TUBS AND EDUCATION

|N 1894 the bath tub was introduced as a factor in Illinois public education, when one board of education decreed that the basements of two schools should be fitted with bath tubs for the use of children found by truant officers.

The board decreed that boys who seemed to be in need of a bath were to receive a scrubbing under the supervision of the school janitor and that the girls in a similar condition should be taken in charge by the women employed as assistant janitors.

RESTRICTING DAW CUPID

|N 1899 a group of Illinois bachelors agreed to marry widows only, according to a news item of that year. The club, formed in Peoria consisted of 35 members for whom penalties and expulsion were provided for violation of rules. Bachelors who married widows with children received a sum of money taken from funds collected from fines.

CANOE FOR A FERRY

A^N abandoned Indian canoe was once put into service as a ferry across the Kishwaukee River at Belvidere, Illinois. The makeshift ferry, however, did not last long. When a rumor spread that the canoe had belonged to Black Hawk, the famous Indian chief, souvenir hunters literally tore the craft to pieces.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

PLOWING AND SNAKES

IN the early days of Illinois, when settlers were beginning to break the land for the first crops, snakes in large numbers were frequently troublesome by-products. When a patch of ground was plowed, the reptiles migrated to unplowed sections. Sometimes a considerable plot of ground was left in the center of a plowed area, to which literally hundreds of snakes made their way.

Some early residents tell terrifying stories of the way the snakes would break in all directions at the approach of the plow, and of the almost unbelievable numbers that were killed before the first crop was harvested. Oxen were frequently bitten, but seldom seemed to be seriously affected. However, pioneers who walked the fields in their bare feet carefully avoided the startled reptiles.

PRANK AIDS WEARY PIONEER

PLAYING pranks constituted a part of the amusement of Illinois pioneers. The account of a group of hunters after 'coon is a good example. One of the older men, who became tired, thought of a ruse to get some rest and at the same time to have fun with his companions. Sharpening a hard stick, he made "bear scratches" on the trunk of a large tree in such a way as to indicate that a bear had climbed to the high branches. He then shouted to the rest of the group to cut down the tree and to keep their guns in readiness. In the meantime he sat down nearby holding the dogs and resting. When the tree fell, every one except the prankster was mystified not to find the bear.

HORSE POWER AT EARLY FAIRS

EARLY in the history of county fairs in Illinois strength-testing contests between rival teams of draft horses were popular features, and some remarkable records were achieved.

In 1837, during a trial-of-strength contest for horses at the Montgomery County Fair, according to a Hillsboro news report of the time, two teams, weighing 2,024 and 2,500 pounds, respectively, each pulled two wagons carrying more than five tons for a short distance. A rear wheel of each wagon was locked, and the ground was loose and slightly rising.

The article also pointed out that at the Massachusetts State Fair held in the same year, double teams pulled a load of 5,500 pounds, in addition to the wagon, which weighed 3,355 pounds.

NAME-CHANGE TO PAXTON REMAINS

WHEN early residents of Ford County, Illinois, learned that Sir Richard Paxton, of England, planned to organize a colony and settle in Illinois they changed the name of Prospect City to Paxton in hopes of influencing Sir Richard to settle there, it is said.

The townspeople were disappointed, however, for Sir Richard settled elsewhere. The new name of the town, however, remained unchanged.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

PROBLEM FOR EDUCATORS

ILLINOIS educators of 63 years ago pondered over the problem of whether they should spend funds to pay for instruction in a subject now commonly called shorthand, but in those days referred to as phonography.

A newspaper report noted that in Cook County "nearly one hundred persons have applied for admission to the evening schools who intended to acquire a knowledge of phonography. The question that arises is, is this study of sufficient importance for the county to hire a special teacher to impart the knowledge.

Before long, thousands of students were being given instruction in this subject.

CANNONBALLS IN JAIL WALLS

CANNONBALLS placed between adjoining stones were used by the builders of the Macoupin County jail at Carlinville. This unique structure, the fourth jail house built there since 1832, has proved practically escape-proof because of its mode of construction.

STRAWBERRY BOX NOTES

I N 1885, an ingenious young lady provided a romantic angle to Centralia's strawberry-packing industry. One day during a few moments of leisure the enterprising girl picked up a strawberry box and wrote a letter on it. Happily surprised when a reply was received, she continued her strawberry-box correspondence and soon had more than a hundred answers from all parts of the United States.

COST OF LIGHT AND SUDS

R EMINISCENT of the days before the advent of electricity is the advertisement of a Springfield man in the Sangamo Journal, an early Illinois newspaper, 1832, for a tallow chandler and soap boiler.

Steady employment is promised to any person who can combine these two "professions" and complaint is made that "miserable candles are now selling at 10 to 12 cents per lb. Hard soap is brought from St. Louis, and retails at 12 and a half cents per lb. Soft soap is scarce at 6 and a quarter."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

A "WEOA" AND A WOE FOR "HOSS" AND BUYER

ILLINOIS farmers have a standard vocabulary, which they use when speaking to their domesticated animals, and to try to change it is dangerous. In handling horses, the common terms, of course, are: "gee," meaning go to the right; "haw," go to the left; "whoa," stop; "get up," or giddyup," go forward.

However, a Jefferson County man, familiar with the army commands of "foward," "halt," "right turn," and "left turn," taught his colts to respond to these orders. All went well until he sold a team to a neighbor. The next day, he was surprised when the purchaser, in an irate mood, accompanied by the county sheriff, arrived at his farm with the news that he was being sued for selling "balky horses" without mentioning the fact. He readily explained why the animals "balked," but had to prove his statements by making the team respond to his martial terminology before the buyer agreed to drop the suit.

JOLLY FIDDLERS PLAY

FIDDLERS' contests were popular features in many Illinois communities during early days. Competitions were often arranged among experts from neighboring counties. At one such contest held in Charleston, Coles County, in 1899, six counties were represented by 122 fiddlers, according to a news item of the time. The numerous tunes played at this gala event included such favorites as "Granny Will Your Dog Bite?" and "Fisher's Horn Pipe."

FRENCH SETTLERS' STURDY HOUSES

FRENCH pioneers who lived in old Kaskaskia long before that historic community became the first capital of the State of Illinois, used a distinctive method of building their cabins. Instead of the notched-end type of construction commonly used by other settlers, the French drove posts well into the ground and braced them with cross strips.

Straw and mortar filled the spaces evenly and as a result a finished appearance was given to the building both inside and out. Roofs were made of thatch and often extended far beyond the edges of the walls.

SEWING WITHOUT WORDS

SILENCE proved to be golden for a group of Illinois women in 1899. In this year, three doubting men offered one dollar each to the Ladies' Aid Society of Monmouth, Mercer County, on condition that its members would sew for a given length of time at a local quilting bee without speaking a word,

Accepting the challenge, 15 members of the society courageously plied their needles for three hot, weary hours in silence. So impressed were the men with this display of fortitude that after the women had finished they paid double, it is said.

EARLY GAME LAWS

ONE of the earliest Illinois game laws for the protection of wild animals and fowls was passed by the legislature in 1853. Closed season in a number of counties was from January 1 to July 20 each year. The fine for killing deer and fawn out of season was set at \$15; for prairie chicken, quail, and woodcock, \$5.

In 1873, a new game law made dealers and others punishable if found with game in their possession during the "inhibited season." Game from other states or in transit across Illinois was not affected by the law.

Six years later, there was further revision, made to harmonize with laws of neighboring states. Many persons were said to have escaped punishment by claiming that game in their possession out of season came from other states. The law further allowed an "informer" to receive one-half of the fine collected.

COEDS CURB COLLEGE BOYS

THE "disciplinary problem" resulting from opening co-educational colleges caused considerable alarm in Illinois 50 years ago. Some alarmists may have been heartened by the simple expedient used by one of the early co-educational schools. A spokesman for this institution declared no regulations were necessary because "the young women don't require any, and they discipline the young men by their very presence."

ROCK FORMATION EXPLAINED

ONE of the extraordinary geological features found in Illinois can be seen at Horseshoe, situated on the northern outlet of the Eagle Creek Basin, Saline County. This phenomenon consists of great layers of hard rock standing nearly on edge at various points in a huge basin, from which road materials are being removed. It is believed, by geologists, that the same forces which heaped up some parts of the ridge bordering Eagle Basin, have here raised and turned on edge these layers from a depth of more than 2000 feet.

DOUBLE DUTY FOR ONE FERRYBOAT

IN 1839, alert Illinois owners of a steam-powered ferryboat at Alton observed that the engine generated more power than was being consumed to propel their craft across the Illinois River. By connecting a pair of millstones to the engine, the industrious operators were able "to grind 200 bushels of fine meal per day" during the course of the ferryboat's trips, according to a newspaper account of the time.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

COMEDY IN EARLY BASEBALL

THERE was a time when baseball fielders took their jobs lying down and when it was a violation of rules to catch a "fly." "Muffins" or "Muffs," baseball teams organized solely to provide amusement for spectators, became popular in Illinois in 1867. The idea was to "muff" as many plays as possible.

If a fielder followed the rules of the "muffin" games, he sat down when a ball came in his direction and pointed it out to other fielders too far away to make the catch. Baserunners always ran on foul balls. If a batter accidentally hit a "homer," he had to be sure to mistake the pitcher's mound for first base so as to give his opponents an opportunity to recover the ball before he could run around all the bases. The pitcher had to try to hit the bat with the ball, and thus spare the batter unnecessary exertion.

"WIDDERSHINS"

OLD Sol played an important role in soap-making during Illinois pioneer days. Housewives, attending their huge iron kettles of soap-in-the-making, believed they must stir the mixture from east to west, as the sun apparently moves. If the stirring was carried on in any other way, it was believed that the soap lost its cleansing properties.

The term for this stirring technique was "widdershins," a variant of withershins, an Anglo Saxon word meaning backward or the reverse of the direction in which the sun seems to move.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

RANDOLPH COUNTY HUB OF NEW WORLD

ILLINOIS' Randolph County, which today is principally an agricultural and mining area, was once the hub of business, military, and governmental operations in the middle west.

For almost a century, it furnished the "new world" with much of its flour, grain, and livestock. It boasted the strongest fort, Fort Chartres, which was built by the French in 1720.

Illinois' first capital, after the territory was organized as a state and admitted to the Union in 1818, was Kaskaskia, then the leading town in Randolph County. Encroaching waters of the Mississippi River, which now completely covers the original site of the town, caused the capital to be moved shortly thereafter to Vandalia.

CRITICISM FOR SUNDAY SAILING

SUNDAY yachting shocked Illinois society when it was introduced in 1876, and the participants were for a time severely criticized. Some critics accused the clubs of conducting "convivial gatherings" and said they were carrying on "in the face of public sentiment."

Members were even threatened with being tabooed from society and warned they would receive "encouragement only from those who practice riotous living," according to newspaper accounts.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

GAMES MADE TRAVEL EASIER

ILLINOIS tourists who count objects along the roadside or name various makes of passing automobiles in an effort to break the monotony of highway trips have much in common with travelers of early times. Pioneer children as well as adults often enjoyed games while traveling between communities of the state by stage-coach.

One of these games, known as "Prairie Loo," was played by counting the animals seen from the coach, according to the observations of an early Illinois traveler. Each animal represented a certain number of points, such as ten for a wolf and one for a prairie chicken. The first person to make a score of 100 won. Wild life was so abundant along highways during those days that it was often possible to play several games before noon, it was reported.

WILD FOWL THREATENED WHEAT CROP

FOR many years, in the early period of the development of Illinois, wild fowl were so plentiful that they were sometimes a nuisance to settlers. Wild geese, swooping down upon wheat fields in the vicinity of Nashville, Washington County, became a serious problem to farmers of the area in 1899. Hunters reported seeing the land covered with thousands of the birds, which made easy prey. In later times, wild life resources of Illinois seemed doomed, but now they are partly restored by enforcement of conservation laws.

RIVER CRAFT MOVED

BUSHWACKING, "cordelling," and warping are probably unfamiliar terms to many Illinois residents of today, but in early times, when travel by keel-boat was common they were used by pioneer rivermen to describe various means of propelling their boats. When sails were inadequate, they traveled by rowing, poling, bushwacking, "cordelling," or warping.

If a keel-boat ran close to the shore or the water was high, its crew pulled the craft forward by tugging at bushes that grew near the bank -- bushwacking, so to speak. Cordelling was accomplished by men along the bank who towed the boat by means of a long rope attached to the mast.

When such methods as these were impractical, as in crossing rapids, a member of the crew walked ahead on land and fastened one end of the rope to a tree or rock, leaving the other end loose on the keel-boat. Men aboard the craft pulled the line from bow to stern, repeating the operation, called warping, as many times as was necessary to get the boat across.

FARMERS ON HORSEBACK

BRINGING farm implements into Illinois during pioneer times was often a discouragingly difficult task, and many early settlers experienced severe hardships in transporting them from one place to another. Because of the scarcity of skilled labor, long trips were sometimes made for repairs. One historian has recorded that some farmers traveled 50 or 60 miles on horseback with their plow shares to have them properly reconditioned.

THE MILITARY TRACT

AMONG the huge Government land grants offered as bounties to soldiers who fought in the War of 1812 as the Military Tract in Illinois. This land, between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, comprised some 5,500,000 acres, most of which had been surveyed by the end of 1818.

With the tide of immigration towards the northern part of the state in 1830, large numbers of settlers moved into the Tract to make homes. By 1831 there were approximately 10,000 people in the southeastern part of the area, which included Calhoun, Pike, Adams, Schuyler, and Fulton counties. An additional 2,000 inhabitants lived in other sections of the Military Tract, chiefly in Hancock, Knox, and Henry Counties. There had been issued 17,075 patents for 2,831,840 acres of land by 1837.

TEACHERS MEET

THE forerunner of Teachers' Institutes in Illinois was a common school convention held in Chicago in 1846, which seems to have been the first Teachers' Institute held in the state.

A quarter of a century later the organization had grown to such proportions that a County Institute of November, 1871 reported "130 lady teachers and 30 gentlemen teachers in attendance." On July 16, 1891, Marion, Williamson County, was host to 103 teachers who attended an institute at which arrangements were made for similar institutes in every township in the county.

STYLE HAZARDS IN EARLY GOLFING

WHEN golf first won the hearts of feminine players in Illinois about 1901, style in attire seems to have made up for lack of skill in the game. Freedom and comfort were successfully barred by the high starched or boned collars, leg-o-mutton sleeves, and long skirts that swept the grass.

Notwithstanding these hazards records show that the game was followed with high enthusiasm. At Danville, for example all-day excursions to the links became popular. Women left for the courses early in the morning, taking the family horse and buggy and a noon-day lunch.

None of the scores of these early matches seem to have been of enough importance to record but reporters of the period noted that "balls frequently went astray and hit the horses, sometimes narrowly averting accidents."

HONEY HOLDS PEAS ON KNIFE

DURING a recent study of Illinois customs, research workers learned of a way to eat peas which they believe is original. One resident made metrical explanation of his very special method of consuming peas:

I eat peas with honey;
Done it all my life.
Makes the peas taste funny,
But keeps them on my knife.

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL ANECDOTES

READER INTEREST DEVELOPS

DURING the late 1860's and the early 1870's widespread interest in reading led to the founding of a number of public libraries in Illinois.

Organized in 1867, the Ladies' Auxiliary Library Association of Pekin, Tazewell County, at length became the nucleus for a public library. In 1872, Elgin voted a tax of three-fourths of a mill on each dollar's worth of taxable property for the purpose of building a public library.

A theatrical performance known as "The Drummer Boy" was staged in Bloomington, McLean County, in 1873 to provide funds for the Ladies' library, which already had achieved the reputation for being "a most flourishing institution." In the same year a library was added even to the Beardstown jail in Cass County. The public library at Peoria was reported as having acquired 8,534 volumes in 1874.

FROM SAND, SAP, AND GRAVEL

ILLINOIS pioneers often constructed ingenious devices to offset their lack of modern conveniences. One of these, a large grindstone, was made years ago by an early settler of Brooks Grove, McHenry County, who applied sand and gravel to the outer surface of a disc from a freshly cut tree and allowed the abrasive mixture to dry into the green wood. When this crude grindstone was made to revolve, "an axe could be sharpened or scratched, and something of an edge given to it," according to an account of 1874.

SKATER CARRIED NEWS TO GALENA

ELECTION news traveled on skates in 1839, according to an anecdote told by a Rock Island resident. Word that General Andrew Jackson had been elected president arrived on a December day at Fort Armstrong, which was located on the present site of the Rock Island Arsenal. J. W. Spencer, a mail carrier, was offered \$5 in gold to carry the news to Galena. He accepted the sum, skated up the Mississippi River, and arrived at his destination without mishap.

MARKERS USED ON OLD TRAIL

HIGHWAY markers, it is believed, were first used in Illinois along the historic Kellogg's Trail from Peoria to Galena in 1827.

Numerals showing distances were carved into trees along the trail and covered with red paint to make for better visibility. This famous road has been referred to as the first highway entirely made by pioneers in northern Illinois.

GAS, OIL, AND TIRES VERSUS HAY AND OATS

I N 1910 the horse and buggy came in second in a maintenance contest with the automobile. An automobile of the time, it was asserted, operated at a cost of one and four-fifths cents per passenger mile, but the horse and buggy cost two and one-half cents to cover the same distance.

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL ANECDOTES

HAZARDS OF STAGECOACH TRAVEL

ILLINOIS tourists who are accustomed to traveling in streamlined trains, motor buses, and automobiles may read with interest accounts of the inconveniences of travel during earlier times. According to one pioneer's record of a stagecoach journey across the Illinois prairies in midwinter, a group of travelers began their trip on a morning in January, 1834, in a four-horse carriage, but abandoned the coach for a sleigh at the first station because of huge drifts.

Because the horses made their way through the snow with great difficulty, another team was added the next day. Later, after a complete change of horses had been made, the passengers twice escaped disaster when the animals broke through ice in crossing streams. Finally the driver was plunged knee-deep in water, and reached a farm house just in time to save his frost bitten feet.

EARLY ILLINOIS WATERMELONS

WATERMELONS were known to have been grown in Illinois long before the coming of white settlers. Records of both Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet mention the excellent melons that were known to the Illinois Indians.

In the course of the years, Illinois acreage set aside for the popular fruit has varied. During 1933, a notable year for its production, growers here devoted 8,800 acres to its cultivation.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

FERRY RATES ON HISTORIC WABASH

THREE years before Illinois became a state, rates for ferry service across the Wabash River at Palmyra were established. A court order of 1815 stipulated that charges should be for "each wheel of a cart, carriage or wagon, 18 and three-quarters cents; and each horse drawing the same, 12 and one-half cents. For every man and horse, from the first day of December until the last day of May inclusive, be 25 cents; and from the first day of June until the last day of November, inclusive, be 12 and one-half cents and each head of sheep and hogs, 3 cents.

Poor weather conditions during the winter months, it has been explained, account for the higher passenger rate from December to May.

OLD COURTHOUSE SERVES WELL

DURING the course of nearly a century the old Logan County courthouse at Mount Pulaski, has had a varied history. It was built in 1847 at a cost of \$3,000 and served its original purpose until 1853. The county seat was then moved to Lincoln. In 1857, when Mount Pulaski needed a schoolhouse, the idle courthouse was assigned for this use by the General Assembly, until a modern school building was erected.

At length it was designated as the town's Post's Office. In 1936, however, the postal department was moved to new quarters and later the widely known old structure was presented to the State of Illinois as an historical monument.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

TRADER RIDES FAR FOR HELP

A STIRRING chapter in the story of Illinois tells of a famous rider, who, like Paul Revere, sped through the night to summon help. He sought assistance, however, not to oppose the Redcoats, but to defend a brave group of pioneers imperiled by Indian warriors.

The hero was Gurdon Hubbard, first white settler in Iroquois County and a widely known fur trader of his day. The time was 1827, and the place, a small outpost at the foot of Lake Michigan that had been named Chicago.

One day Hubbard's business of bartering pelts was interrupted by word of an imminent attack by the powerful Winnebago tribe. Hubbard, at once, volunteered to go to Danville for help. He rode hard over the 130 miles of wilderness trails, crossed many unbridged streams, and reached Danville the next day. Hurriedly raising 50 men, he returned to aid the threatened settlers only to learn that the Winnebago Indians signed a truce and the danger was over.

TURKEYS TROT MILES TO MARKET

ACCORDING to old Illinois settlers in and about the hamlet of Rice near Pinkneyville, Perry County, pioneer farmers often drove their flocks of turkeys on foot to the market at St. Louis, 70 miles away. For many years after the community was established in the 1830's, there were no adequate nearby marketing centers.

"Butchering day" was a community affair throughout the region, and all surplus dressed pork was shipped by wagon to St. Louis, where it was sold frequently for only three and four cents a pound.

CUPOLAS FOR WATCHING RACING RIVER BOATS

T
TOURISTS in Illinois who observe that cupolas adorn many homes along the Mississippi River in Madison County, learn with interest that his architectural detail was designed more for utility than for decoration.

During the days when Alton vied with St. Louis as a river port, so it is related, crack steamboats raced from St. Louis to Alton to win the rich load of freight which usually awaited the first steamer that docked. As a consequence, the outcome of these contests became marked features in the life of the townsfolk, who, in many instances, built lookout platforms on their homes from which they could watch the races.

In time, these platforms, which at first were plain and circular, became ornate by the adding of octagonal cupolas. Finally, it is said, they were so highly regarded as features of local architecture that some Alton citizens continued to build them after the river races had ceased. Many of them, indeed, were built on houses far from the river, and as a result the influence of the cupola is commonly found throughout Madison County.

OLD MILL BURNED FOR YEARS

P
PERHAPS the longest burning fire in Illinois history, occurred in pioneer days at Quincy. An old saw mill along the shore of Quincy Lower Bay caught fire. As facilities were inadequate to fight the blaze, it was allowed to run its course. Smoke could be seen arising from the ruins for a quarter of a century, it is said.

PUMPKINS GROW BIG

"PUMPKIN' coaches" rolled out of the pale of fancy to become realities in Illinois during 1838 when a number of giant vegetables were produced in the state. Newspaper accounts of that year tell of products almost fabulous in size.

Among the vegetables which made news in that time, were two pumpkins, one weighing 143½ pounds, and the other, 122 pounds. The heavier one measured six feet and two inches in circumference. Honorable mention, so to speak, was also given to a beet, 3 feet and 4 inches in length, 23 inches in circumference, and 21 pounds in weight; two bunches of celery, each 3 feet and 6 inches in length, and a cabbage weighing 19 pounds.

GRAIN FOR BALLAST

I N 1894, Illinois grain merchants refused to permit their holdings to go to some foreign markets even with free transportation. For a time, a number of steamships sailing out of Baltimore were in need of ballast for their eastward trip and their owners offered to carry grain free to Antwerp and other European markets.

However, the offer did not affect the grain surplus in this part of the country because the market at home was high enough to make the sales unprofitable even when transportation was free.

SPARROWS POINT WAY IN AVIATION

I t is said that sparrows taught an Illinois inventor an important lesson in the field of aviation. Octave Chanute a Peoria resident, it is related, observed how the little birds turn their tails downward to increase air resistance when stopping their flight. The result was the "tail low" theory of landing airplanes.

Chanute made several other contributions to aviation. Among them was the Chanute Biplane, a motorless glider, which weighed only 23 pounds and could carry 178 pounds at 23 miles per hour. In 1889, when Chanute was 60 years of age, he arranged what has been called the first successful glider demonstration in the United States at Dune Park along Lake Michigan.

CLEARING EARLY FIELDS

M ANY of the early fields in Illinois presented a "dismal appearance," according to an account written in 1819. A traveler of the time observed that frequently settlers cleared the ground by grubbing up small trees only. Large ones were either cut down to within three feet of the ground or merely "chopped around the stems," and a small strip of bark peeled off. Decay then was left to take its course and the land owners were saved the trouble of cutting down the trees.

When the underbrush, roots, and smaller trees were burned where they lay, the fire often spread to the larger standing trees. In some areas, a visitor could commonly see about one hundred half burned trees to each eight or ten acres under cultivation.

STARS, MOON, FISH IN FOLKLORE

E ARLY residents in Illinois, who came from many racial groups, brought to communities throughout the state a wide variety of folklore. Survivals of these beliefs are always important to the scholar and interesting to tourists and other visitors.

In Pike County, for example, some persons still hold that when a circle seems to be around the moon, a storm will follow. The exact number of days before its arrival can be determined by counting the stars within the circle.

Fish that get into ponds from larger bodies of water sometimes find they are trapped when the water level rapidly falls. They need not worry, it is thought, because low water simply means that higher water is just around the corner.

One fisherman still holds that rabbits may have a direct bearing on good luck for the hook and line. He is of the opinion, it is said, that fortune favors the person, who, as he proceeds to his favorite fishing spot, keeps turning his hat half way around each time he spies a rabbit.

EXPERTS COUNT DAMAGE TO CROPS

E ARLY growers of fruit and cereals in Illinois probably never thought that the day would come when experts working for the State could tell how much stem and leaf tissue was destroyed annually by insects. However, their successors generally know now that they can get this information, as well as much more important data about hazards to their crops, for records of the Natural Survey now cover nearly twenty years.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

FAMOUS ICE CARNIVALS ONCE HELD

FOR many years Illinois skating enthusiasts looked forward to the great and gay ice carnivals held regularly on the Chicago River. For over a mile beyond the historic Rush Street Bridge, great crowds gathered about bonfires and made merry far into the night.

Celebrated skaters sometimes came from distant points. One record of 1859 mentions visitors from New York state and Canada. In addition to providing an ideal course for skaters and spectators, the fine stretch of ice was ideal for horse racing.

INDIANS DEMANDED PAY

EARLY white settlers in Illinois sometimes enlisted the help of Indians in constructing their log houses and were prepared to meet their terms. When a Warren County physician decided to build a home, he enlisted the help of several Indians encamped in nearby woods. Their terms were strictly cash on delivery. After each log had been properly placed they were paid. The house, eight logs high, was completed in about a week.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

AN EDISON IN ILLINOIS

AFTER spending several years as engineer on Mississippi steamboats, manufacturer of building supplies in Wisconsin, and wagon master conveying supplies to forts in the west, Absalom O. Edison, cousin of the famous Thomas A. Edison, made his permanent home in Martinton, Iroquois County. He was born in Canada in 1830. After establishing a wagon shop in Martinton, he engaged in carpentry and housebuilding, and was, in turn, justice of the peace, township assessor, highway commissioner, constable, school director, and school trustee.

VILLAGE GROWS FROM OATS

RINARD, now a village of about one hundred persons in Wayne County, is said to have had its beginnings in the promise of a side track through the proposed site if several thousand bushels of oats could be secured for shipment. The community was named after Adam Rinard, one of two men who agreed to ship the grain.

PART TWO

FROM INDUSTRIES TO WEDDING BELLS

VANISHED INDUSTRIES OF ILLINOIS

SPECTACULAR changes that have taken place in certain communities of this state since Civil War days. The pattern followed in that of lowly beginnings, accelerating rise, boom prosperity and then decline -- typical of practically all growth curves. These instances illustrate, as nothing else can, some of the effects of rapid technological development in America during the past century, in terms of social change.

One outstanding example comes from Galena, Illinois. It is a story of lead mining. Each stage of this major local industry -- early promise, boom, and decline -- is reflected in the fortunes of the city as an institution, and in the lives of its people.

Because of deposits of galena (lead ore) in the surrounding hills, Galena became one of America's earliest boom towns. As early as 1826, when Chicago was only a swamp village, it was a tumultuous outpost, populated by miners, trappers, traders, gamblers, and river men. In 1841 the population was 2,225. Steady development of lead mining, growing markets for the product, and improving transportation facilities through the thirties and early forties gave promise to this pioneer city of over-soaring, never-ending prosperity and growth. Maximum lead production was attained there in 1845, with more than 27,000 tons from twenty-three smelters, as against 32,500 tons for the whole country.

At this point the rate of production leveled off, and after a few years entered upon a continuous decline. As the easily accessible surface diggings were worked out, the expense of sinking deeper mines increased. Competition from other parts of the country was on the increase. Profits diminished. Production fell off. By 1860 the population had dropped to 10,000. Today the smelters are in ruins and lead mining as an industry is of negligible importance. Galena, now a city of less than 4,000 inhabitants, has long since learned to sustain itself and prosper without dependence on the lead mines. But the reminders of mining days still give it special interest and distinction.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

Another vanished industry of early Illinois is that of salt production, principally at what were known as the Gallatin, Big Muddy, and Vermillion salines (salt springs or wells). Accounts of old settlers represent the Vermillion salines just west of Danville as having been worked by the Indians as early as 1750, after which they had been lost. Researchers of present-day archaeologist, however, indicate that salt production had been carried on here by prehistoric people. By the year 1824, the springs had been rediscovered, and were in possession of one Captain Blackman. By him they were sold in that year to J.W. Vance, who proceeded to develop them. For this purpose he brought forty-four kettles by boat and oxcart from Louisville.

Each hundred gallons of this brine yielded, upon evaporation, about one bushel of dry salt. This was distributed by boat and wagon to local buyers as far west as the Sangamon and Illinois rivers. With the discovery of brine on the Kanawha River, and the opening of the Chicago River to lake vessels, competition and technological progress eliminated the salt industry, so far as Vermillion County was concerned.

At the Gallatin salines, in the southeastern corner of Gallatin County, nine furnaces of sixty kettles each are said to have been in regular operation, producing more than 3,000 bushels of salt per week, or 130,000 bushels per year -- deducting for lost time. The salt sold at the works for thirty-seven to fifty cents per fifty-pound bushels.

The Big Muddy salines were in the vicinity of Brownsville in Jackson County, where there were two factories, one operated by Conrad Will and the other by a firm of Nielsons. The Will plant produced from a hundred to a hundred and fifty bushels per week, pumping its water through a copper tube from a depth of 203 feet. The Nielsons produced fifty to sixty bushels in a twenty-four hour period, and pumped their water from a four hundred foot depth.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

An example of an industry that committed suicide, through the dissipation of irreplaceable natural resources, is that of lumbering in the cypress swamp of Johnston County. Here, as late as 1885, stood a 100,000 acre tract of virgin forest in which bald cypress trees predominated. The species of cypress that grew here has no taproot, and the numerous branch roots join several feet above ground to form a solid trunk measuring four feet or more in diameter. Many of these trees towered 150 feet above the swampland. The lumbermen who entered the swamp came in boats, cut the trees several feet above ground, and floated them to the sawmill. Between 1885 and 1900, the entire forest was felled. Today only isolated cypress trees remain.

EARLY TRAVEL AND THE WIND

ILLINOIS pioneers frequently depended upon the direction of the wind to guide them across the uncharted prairies. After noting the point from which the wind was blowing, they plotted their route in accordance with it. However, if the wind changed they were in danger of becoming lost, especially during the night. Travelers often welcomed the sight of lights that many early settlers regularly placed as beacons in cabin windows or on poles.

TAVERN OWNERS BID FOR TRADE

RIVALRY, sometimes bitter and other times friendly, enlivened the days of tavern owners in pioneer times. Resourcefulness played its part in getting customers for meals and lodging, and travelers had many a good laugh over the devices tavern keepers used to get business.

In one instance the main road broke into two branches for a short distance. Each branch had its tavern and a problem for the owner was how passersby could be made to take one fork or the other. It is reported that all went merrily until one proprietor started cutting down trees so that they fell across the road leading by the tavern of his neighbor.

Other owners made much of signs and the drawings on some are said to have made up in humor what they lacked in skill. One sign, it is related, was supposed to represent an eagle, but those who saw it generally agreed that it looked more like a turkey. Another sign supposed to portray a lion, looked very much like a prairie wolf, according to the artistic judgment of most persons who saw it.

BOUND OUT TO LEARN LIFE WORK

ILLINOIS, in early days and for some years thereafter, followed the practice of the times in permitting children to be "bound out" to tradesmen and farmers who would give them training for their life work. Some boards of County Commissioners ruled on such agreements. In one instance, records for the year of 1829 show that a two year old lad was bound to an Illinois farmer until he is 21 years of age "to learn the occupation of farmer." Two girls, one four and the other eight, according to the same record, were bound out until they had become of age - 18 years old.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

WARS, WOOL, RAILROAD NAME VILLAGE

I N southeastern Illinois, where important chapters in the state's history were written long before much of the central and northern portions had been settled, the village of Wool prospered for many years as a widely known community on the mail route between Grantsburg and Golconda.

Its resourceful and public minded citizens knew that the village name honored General John E. Wool, 1789-1869, who had served with distinction in the War of 1812 as well as later under Zachary Taylor during the Mexican War. However, visitors and others, ignorant of the origin of the name, joked about it and sometimes associated it with a clearing point for fleeces. As a result, agitation was started to make a change.

At length, it was agreed to re-name the community Brownfield, partly in honor of the deceased husband of the postmistress at that time, and partly in honor of Lewis Field, a popular young man associated with Brown in his mercantile business. All went well until the first railroad to enter Pope County decided to establish a station one mile and a half southeast. Mrs. Brown quickly offered to give land for a portion of the right of way if the new station would be called Brownfield. This arrangement was approved. The original, historical village became known as Old Brownfield, and the new community with its transportation advantages became a center of important influences in the development of the area.

PIONEERS COULD BUY LUXURIES

WHEN Illinois became a state in 1818, its pioneers at some points in the south, could purchase a wide variety of fine manufactured goods, most of which had come from large eastern centers, such as Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

In one account of those early times, an advertisement is noted of a merchant at Carmi in White County, who was opening a new store. Among the articles he offered were tea kettles, ivory and common combs, silk handkerchiefs, India muslins, stationery, window glass, sieves, grindstones, hand saws, dutch ovens, frying pans, "and a great variety of cutlery."

Another early advertisement shows that settlers could find a market close at home for some of their own products. One storekeeper announced that he would pay cash for "tallow, candle cotton, turnips, soft flax for wicks, onions, parsnips, carrots, venison, hams, butter, cheese, eggs, potatoes, hops, sage, and twilled bags."

ILLINOIS BUMPER CROPS

SOIL of many Illinois counties gave remarkable yields of grain years ago. The Montgomery County Herald on Aug. 8, 1857, reports that Moses Berry threshed out 708 bushels of oats from 12 acres and "not all the grain was threshed so it ran not less than 60 bushels to the acre."

The market report for 1857 from the town of Hillsboro listed oats at 40 cents a bushel and corn at 50 cents. Eggs were eight cents a dozen.

CANAL ROUTE SURVEYED FIVE TIMES

So many routes were suggested for the Hennepin Canal, from the Illinois River near Hennepin to the Mississippi, that five in all were surveyed before one was finally selected.

The first survey, made in 1866, was followed by others in 1870, 1874, 1884, and in 1885-1886. The route eventually chosen was that by the way of Penny's Slough and the Rock River. Although construction work began in 1892, the entire 77-mile length of the Hennepin Canal was not open for use until 1907, when the project was completed at an estimated total cost of \$7,500,000.

For some 50 miles the waterway, which is known also as the Illinois and Mississippi Canal, follows the Rock Island route and then joins the Rock River near Dixon to flow into the Mississippi River over this 27-mile feeder.

LAND HELD FOR RISING MARKET

AN early Illinois traveler, writing of his journeys, deplored the retarding influence of land speculators on the growth of the state. He pointed out that frequently "land jobbers" would watch the establishment of new settlements and wherever any gave promise of prospering, they would purchase great blocks of property and hold them for a price.

Frequently, the visitor pointed out, new settlers would not be able to pay the prices asked and would have to be content to buy property some distance from the community they wished to be in or near. As a result, population tended to be scattered, and backwoods customs had to be maintained for a much longer time than would have been necessary if communities could have advanced in a unified way.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

BARBER SHOP ACCORD

SOME years ago Illinois residents who found themselves in need of a shave or a hair cut sometimes engaged in heated arguments at the barber shop because they were not sure who was "next." Frequently long lines of customers waited their turn, and it was not uncommon for several of them to leave for a short time, possibly to visit nearby friends, or to place an order at the general store. Sometimes when these men returned to claim their place in line they discovered that they had to begin all over again. Arguments naturally resulted, some of which are reported to have been far from gentle.

In view of these distressing circumstances, an inventive resident of Pekin decided that man's ingenuity could be used to avoid misunderstanding as to whose turn it was with the barber. He made a circular shaped indicator with a dial and numbers on it, controlled from within the barber shop, and placed it so that it could be plainly seen from the main window.

When a customer entered, instead of sitting in line, he would be given a number. Then, he could go his way, and a short time before the barber was ready for him the pointer would indicate that it was his turn. A newspaper account of the time stated that the invention would "make everything serene hereafter in the parlors of the artists tonsorial."

BRIDES WITH SKILLETS WANTED

IN the early days of settlement in Illinois, advertisements entitled "wife wanted" were not uncommon in the pioneer press. Sometimes the wording of the advertising was exceedingly specific. One instance to illustrate this point occurred in a notice which announced that if any girl were interested, she should possess a skillet as well as ability to make a hunting shirt.

LAMP OIL FROM CASTOR BEAN

LESS than 100 years ago illumination in many homes and places of business in Illinois was by lamps filled with castor oil. Indeed, this type of lighting was so popular that it was preferred over all others in some parts of the state.

A writer of the time stated in the Jacksonville Journal, "It may not be generally known that castor oil, is better for lamps than sperrn or lard oil, which is the fact. Some years since, when this oil was cheaper than either of the others, the editors of that paper used it in their parlor lamps, much pleased with the result; it is a white, clear, beautiful light, and does not clog the wick."

The source of the oil was the castor bean, then grown commonly in southern Illinois, where mild temperatures were suitable for its proper development.

CITY FATHERS CONCERNED ABOUT EARLY CAR OWNERS

EARLY ordinances in Illinois affecting the use of automobiles showed that City Fathers were determined to leave no stone unturned to protect both driver and pedestrian. Indicative of the spirit of the times, traffic regulations in Moline restricted the speed of automobiles to one mile in six minutes.

If an automobile was driven at night, the owner had to display prominently at least one lantern "throwing a white light in front, and the rear of the car had to carry a lantern throwing a red beam." Purchasers of automobiles were required to register them with the City Clerk.

In one instance, a fee of \$1.00 was charged, for which the owner of the car received a metallic tag. He was required to display it on the rear of his automobile.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

RAFTSMEN SING TO LIGHTEN TASKS

PIONEER days in Illinois were accompanied by a variety of traditional tunes that enlivened the hours of work and leisure of many early builders of the state.

To the historian the raftsmen's music is of special significance as it is an important feature of the social scene. It has been learned that practically every commercial craft operating on the stream had its fiddler, upon whom depended most of the entertainment during the long trips of trading and transport. Indeed, one authority points out that fiddlers were considered to be as important as cooks.

During the years of early settlement, with many rafts moving up and down the Mississippi, settlers along the Illinois shore became familiar with traditional tunes, such as "One-eyed Riley" and "Louisiana Gals." Aboard the rafts, these songs were generally accompanied by vigorous slapping of the floor with the bootsoles of the crew.

WELL! WELL! AN EARTHQUAKE

ILLINOIS residents in the southeastern part of the state were startled in October, 1891, by a severe earthquake that created unusual conditions in several communities. Residents at Carrollton reported that a deep artesian well serving the community had stopped flowing.

It was discovered that the pipe bringing the water to the surface had been broken and sand had become so firmly packed against the lower valve that the pump refused to work. Other portions of this area reported similar havoc affecting the water supply.

PEAR PEST DESTROYED TREES

WHEN Illinois pear and apple trees by the thousands became the victims of a terrible blight in the 1850's, experts discovered that an insect discernable only under the microscope was to blame. Growers whose orchards had been severely affected watched anxiously as extraordinary efforts were made to check the blight.

A report of the time tells of experiments with "soap, lye, ashes, lime, copperas, sulphur, plaster, tobacco, spirits of turpentine, coal tar, charcoal, assafoetida, and a whole apothecary shop of other drugs." So troublesome was the pest that it was referred to "as the pear devil."

SING A SONG OF HAPPY HOMES

BELIEF in the gentle art of housekeeping might have led a number of Illinois homemakers some years ago to adopt "Home, Sweet Home" as a theme song. These enthusiastic ladies were of the opinion that if business and professional demands required trained personnel, the home also needed skill gained through study.

As a result a "housekeepers' short course" was introduced at the University of Illinois in 1904, and from the very first day it proved to be popular. The enrollment increased steadily, and by its sixth year included 175 homemakers.

FROGS AND ICE

ACCORDING to historical accounts, visiting weather men to Illinois could find no better place for a holiday than Logan County. Here, both tradition and records tell of meteorological phenomena which, in some instances at least, still remain subjects of amazing narratives.

To begin with, the "great snow" began to fall in November, 1830, and continued through February 2, 1831, after isolating hundreds of settlers who found travel blocked because of $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet of snow. Drifts were as high as houses. However, by way of contrast, the following winter was exceptionally mild. One historian reports that on January 5, 1833, "frogs croaked in the water pools, grass was green, and May apples were shooting up several inches."

In 1836 the "big freeze" froze chickens in their tracks; in 1844 high waters covered the land from spring to June; in 1883 a sleet storm took a stupendous toll from groves and orchards.

If the weather men desire further surprises, they may be interested to hear accounts both of the summer of 1869 when the temperature, it is related, rose to 135 degrees, and of January, 1928, when the official reading of thermometers in Lincoln showed the mercury had dropped to 35 degrees below zero.

NEWLYWEDS FLY HIGH

I N 1892 when several newly married couples in Illinois looked over their wedding gifts they were astonished to find tickets for balloon rides. They decided to use them notwithstanding an additional gift in the shape of a grim note sent by a firm that made tombstones, which volunteered to furnish its products free should the couple need them.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

PACE OF THE FIFTIES TOO FAST FOR COMFORT

SOME Illinois residents in the 1850's felt that life was moving too rapidly for the good of the commonwealth. One resident in a northwestern county bemoaned both the temper and the tempo of the day saying, "We live upon the railroads, we walk by steam, we talk by lightning." The sight of many new faces led to the comment, "Whole families, babies and all, are birds of passage."

However much the bustle and the whirl of the days disturbed this social critic, the extravagance of the time caused even greater concern. An example was cited of a young man "who would spend \$4.00, all on Saturday, to take some curly headed school girl buggy riding."

EXTENSIVE MENU

GOOD food and good fellowship were properly tested in Illinois some two generations ago, and neither was found to be lacking, according to a newspaper account of the opening of the Board of Trade Building at Peoria, December 15, 1875, which was celebrated by a banquet and dance.

The menu included two kinds of soup, five boiled meats, six roast meats, five cold dishes, seven vegetables, and fourteen relishes, in addition to other items, such as sixteen kinds of pastries, fifteen dessert dishes, French coffee, and wines suitable for each course.

As a finale to this festive occasion, the reporter wrote, "The tables were cleared away, and then there was dancing--old time waltzes, Virginia reels, Monnie Musk, lancers, polka, schottische, and quadrilles."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

FORERUNNER OF MOVIES

"LET'S go to a stereoscopic show tonight!"

Such an invitation was probably joyfully received by maidens who were asked out for an evening's entertainment before the days of motion pictures.

Traveling stereoscopic museums that often featured colorful scenes from all parts of the world offered popular diversion for many Illinois communities in early times. One stopping in 1890 at Cambridge, Henry County, was said to have been unusually well attended during its stay. A local newspaper then described the museum as "one of the grandest things that ever struck this part of the country."

GROUND-SWEEPING SKIRTS

WHEN a number of Illinois women organized a club at Cantrall in Sangamon County shortly after the close of the Civil War, one of their announced purposes was to devise means of securing funds to build sidewalks throughout the village.

It seems that the immediate concern of members, however, was not to aid in beautifying the city, but to save wear and tear on long skirts that were in style at the time. Their wearers had discovered that these trailing garments were being seriously affected by the unimproved paths.

So successful were the efforts of the women in this connection that their organization has been prominent ever since in civic improvements.

EVIL-DOERS PUNISHED

I N the early period of the development of Illinois, misdemeanors were occasionally punished by church trials. Session houses were annexed to some churches, and here the ministers with the deacons and the elders would pass judgement on erring members.

Records covering the years 1841 to 1846 of a church at Hopewell tell of a member who was ousted for shooting a coon on Sunday. In the course of the trial, testimony showed that the animal was stealing grain at the time from the preacher's corn crib. This evidence did not soften the decision of the judges, but presumably the marksman regained his good standing after showing that he could reserve his shooting for approved occasions.

EARLY MINERS PAID IN BLANKETS

A N Illinois coal miner, seeking his fortune in Hamilton County 50 years ago, did not find the wealth he hoped for, but did secure several woolen blankets which are reported to be in good shape after 40 years of service.

According to historical records he came to the county at a time when it was being boomed as a rich coal mining area. He secured employment, and was paid for his work, not in money, which was somewhat scarce at the time, but in long wearing woolen blankets.

It seems that in this respect he was more fortunate than he perhaps realized since many of the miners there had to abandon their claims when the rich coal producing areas of Franklin and Saline counties were developed.

P O O R T R A N S P O R T A T I O N S E N T P R I C E S U P

I N the early part of the eighteenth century, inhabitants of the Illinois country paid one hundred times as much for goods made in New Orleans as did the residents of France. The reason seems to have been that it was easier and cheaper to move goods across the ocean than through the American wilderness.

River craft in use at the time were undependable for the transportation of merchandise in large quantities, as they were small, light, and easy to capsize. Since the boats usually had no covering, goods were frequently damaged by exposure to the elements. When in 1733 a covered boat, 43 feet long and 9 feet wide, was launched on the Mississippi, it was considered to be a marked improvement but even with the new type of carrier, the trip up stream consumed 70 days. Land routes offered even greater disadvantages because of danger of attack by Indians and uncertain road conditions.

S U I T O R S D R A W S T R A W S

D R O W N I N G persons may grasp even at straws in an effort to save themselves, it is said, but in 1892 two Illinois bachelors staked their entire future on straws.

In that year, it is related, a beautiful widow of St. Clair County, unable to make a choice, permitted her two ardent suitors to draw straws for her hand in marriage. After the lot was cast in this manner, the wedding, it was announced, would occur in a short time.

GALA TIME FOR LAFAYETTE

ALMOST one-third of Illinois' income in 1825 was spent for the entertainment of Lafayette, according to historical data. The general feeling, seems to have been that nothing was too good for the brilliant young Frenchman, who had crossed the ocean to aid the Colonists in their struggle for independence.

Although generosity was unbounded toward Lafayette, the legislators were extremely careful in making other appropriations. The allotment of \$600 a year for salaries to five circuit judges had been strongly criticized in 1824. Consequently, in 1825, when \$6,475 was allowed for Lafayette's reception, circuit judges were not appointed and existing superior judges were assigned to double duty at their regular pay of \$800 per annum.

HONORABLE HIRED HAND

SOME unusual combinations of activities were followed by early Illinois settlers. A man might be, for example, an army officer, a public official, and a hired man, all at the same time.

In letters describing the English settlement at Albion in 1820, one writer told of talking to a hired plowman. The manner and speech of the laborer were surprisingly refined and above reproach. It was discovered that he was a colonel of militia and a member of the legislature, as well as a hired hand.

ARCHERY RIVALS BASEBALL

I N 1879, archery made a bid for the title of "the great American game" during the first National Archery Tournament, which was held in Illinois. One writer of the time asserted that baseball was too violent and a game in which women could not participate. "Archery," he stated, "deserves to outrank all other sports."

Still other arguments were advanced to place archery on the sports pinnacle. It struck "the happy medium, affording ample pedestrian exercise in recovering sidelong arrows, bringing into full play the muscles of the arms and chest, and withal, cultivating grace of attitude and movement beyond any other sport in the list."

During the tournament, in the old White Stocking Park at Chicago, \$3,000 in prizes were distributed among about 100 contestants.

HORSES CROSS RIVER IN CANOES

W HEN three Illinois pioneers started on a trip to Missouri in 1833, they transported their three horses across the Mississippi river on two canoes. After constructing a platform resting on the canoes and closing it with a railing, the resourceful men set out from Mill Creek near Quincy. The unique craft safely transported its passengers and equipment to the west bank of the stream.

UGLY DISPOSITION PLACES STEER ON DINNER TABLES

AN Illinois steer was hailed before a "regular court" of Adams County residents in 1828 because it "could not be restrained in any ordinary enclosure," according to an historical account of the time.

When the evidence had been weighed the steer stood convicted of "annoying the community" even to a point where forbearance no longer was considered to be a virtue. As a result, it was ordered that the animal "be slaughtered and properly dressed upon a given day and the beef divided per capita among the families of the neighborhood."

Even the hide finally was accounted for. It was made into a belt for use in the local grist mill.

FIRES DRIVE WOLVES TO FARMS

AS late as 1892, timber wolves seriously menaced livestock in some parts of the state. According to a Carthage news item of the time, farmers in Hancock County, who had organized a campaign to rid the area of them, found much difficulty in getting dogs to attack the hunger-crazed creatures. Forest fires had driven the animals south along the ice on the Mississippi River.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

PIONEERS PITY CITY FOLK

LETTERS written by Illinois pioneers show that they took delight in the difficulties of making homes in a new land and had little patience with pity expressed for them by their solicitous friends "back East."

In 1839, an early St. Clair County settler warned a friend that a man "who sits like wax-work for two hours over the same page of his ledger can't possibly live here." He admitted with evident pride that he had waded kneep-deep in mud all the way from the county seat to his farm and that he could see daylight through "the windward side" of his log house.

However, he added, it is something for a man to be "monarch of all he surveys; it is something to have overcome difficulties." He continued by observing, "Take a city chit, who wears a ring and whiskers enough for a bear and a flash coat worth \$50 and exhibit him to a genuine boy of the woods, and the latter would deal as gently with him as with a young opossum, and as much wonder at his prettiness."

BACKYARD AS ADDRESS

BEFORE Illinois villages, towns, and cities adopted numbers and names for streets, useful but somewhat indefinite addresses were commonly to be found in early directories. When Moline issued its directory for 1868-69, one resident's home was given as "House at mill near Henry," and another's was "House near Huntcon's backyard."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

WIDE SKIRT ADVOCATED FOR WOMEN RIDERS

MANY Illinois horsewomen so greatly disliked riding side-saddle in the early 1870's that serious efforts were made to adopt a wide skirt with "an abundance of drapery on each side of the horse." Protests arose because of the number of accidents that had occurred and the question was frequently asked, "Why should not a girl ride exactly as her brother rides?"

A correspondent to a newspaper of the time wrote, "One never knows when our daughters are seated on a horse starting off in gay spirits with a cavalier, whether we shall ever again see them alive. The number of accidents is relatively so large that a parent is necessarily in a chronic state of anxiety every moment a daughter is gone."

ROLLER SKATES POPULAR

ILLINOIS society was amazed and thrilled about 60 years ago with the introduction of roller skates. A pioneer in this sport, which is still popular in many areas, visited the leading towns in the state during October and November, 1876, giving demonstrations of his skill on rollers and instructing novices in the new sport.

By 1880, roller skating had become the vogue and magnificent rinks had been built. Newspaper accounts declared that this amusement was more popular than ballroom dancing. One editorial stated, "It is the proper amusement of our intellectual and social century."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

MORE DOGS THAN PUPILS

DOGGY lessons, such as "a bone should be gnawed and not chewed," might have been in order one morning in 1843 when an Illinois schoolmaster began his day's work. Assembled before him were 20 children and 40 dogs. Indeed, the number of dogs may have been more. In a letter telling of early school days in De Kalb County, the writer confessed that he had found difficulty in making an exact count. "I think", he said, "there were not more than 40."

LAND "WEST OF THE OHIO" ONCE PART OF ILLINOIS

DURING a period of four years, 1778-1782, when Illinois was a county of the Commonwealth of Virginia, it embraced a territory far larger than most persons of the time realized. Indeed, it seems to be doubtful if even legislators in the eastern commonwealth had more than a general idea of its size.

When the Virginia General Assembly met Dec. 9, 1778, it officially recognized the success of the George Rogers Clark expedition and passed an act whereby Illinois county was created. This new governmental unit included "all the citizens of the Commonwealth who are already settled or, shall hereafter settle on the western side of the Ohio."

In 1784, the Continental Congress accepted the offer of Virginia to cede this immense area to the United States, and as a result created the Northwest territory on the basis of an ordinance drawn up by Thomas Jefferson.

ILLINOIS HISTORICAL ANECDOTES

RIVER AND HARBOR CONVENTION

| N these days when several Illinois cities have enough hotels to entertain thousands of delegates to conventions, it is not easy to appreciate fully the sense of pride felt by civic leaders in 1847 when Chicago entertained the River and Harbor convention. Over 20,000 persons came to the state as visitors, and of this number 10,000 were delegates to the great meeting.

In view of the undeveloped condition of nation-wide transportation at that time, the convention established another remarkable record by bringing representatives from 16 states.

NO NEW FISH

| LLINOIS fish are a lively lot of fellows who not only try their best to avoid being taken in "by hook or by crook," but also turn a cold fin quickly on the introduction of foreigners to their shores.

In a study once made by experts concerning the likes and dislikes of underwater inhabitants of the state, the conclusion was reached that little if any improvement among the fish could be gained by stocking Illinois waters with new species.

No argument was advanced to explain why the Illinois fish seem to be clannish. Evidence simply goes to show that they recognize when they are well treated and prefer not to change their present living conditions.

MARKSMEN HOLD CONTESTS

SHOOTING matches in which expert riflemen competed for prizes of quarters of beef drew scores of contestants in central Illinois during the 1870s and 1880s.

Settlers in Montgomery County were especially proud of their skill with rifle or shotgun. A challenge was issued in 1878 to the crack shots of Maccupin, Christian, and Bond Counties, in which they were asked "to come to Hillsboro and take a few lessons in the art of knocking the bull's eye with every shot."

Rules called for a distance of 40 yards off hand or 60 yards with a rest. Prizes were generally four quarters of beef for the four high marksmen and a silver cup for the winning team.

All shooting, however, was not confined to these contests as game was plentiful and the pioneers were able to demonstrate their ability to use either the old cap and ball rifle or the new breach-loading guns, which were becoming popular. One record shows that Feb. 18, 1878, 2,300 pounds of rabbit were shipped from Hillsboro to St Louis, and the Hillsboro paper commented that "it wasn't a very good day for rabbits either."

FOUND BY WELL-DIGGERS

A GROUP of Illinois workmen who once started out to drill a well ended up by unearthing a noteworthy collection of prehistoric life in Scott County, near Deer Lick Spring. They uncovered bones of a mastodon and other prehistoric animals, among them tusks of an extinct species of buffalo.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

CHEAP PORK

I N the early period of the development of Illinois, meat was often less expensive than fat used for candles. Records show that sometimes the price of candle fat was 10 cents a pound and that hogs frequently sold for as little as \$4 per one hundred pounds dressed.

Early settlers often would have from 60 to 100 pigs running wild about their land until butchering time. Identifying notches, or marks, were cut in the ears so as to separate one man's hogs from another's since the porkers commonly wandered freely about the neighborhood.

PIONEER WALKS FAR TO SECURE LICENSE

I F an Illinois bridegroom ever becomes impatient over the few days of waiting required by marriage license laws of his state, he may be consoled by learning that in 1829 one man walked 160 miles to get a marriage license at Peoria.

On the other hand, if the bridegroom must watch his pennies, he will be somewhat saddened to be informed that according to an account of early years in Vermilion County, bride and bridegroom merely drove to the nearest official, who married them at an outlay of not more than a "Thank you, squire," or, "Much obliged, Mr. Dominie."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

EARLY RURAL ROUTES

WHEN rural free mail delivery was established in 1900, a few merchants in a number of Illinois towns were somewhat concerned about effects of the new service on their trade with farmers. As weekly and semi-weekly trips to town for mail meant purchase of merchandize, business men were afraid that free rural delivery would keep farmers at home and thereby reduce trade in villages and towns. However, business continued to be as good as ever, and the new system proved popular with both merchants and farmers.

Many first mail routes were about 25 miles long, with an average of 100 families to a route. Roads usually were bad during winter, and sometimes a mailman did not get home with his horse and buggy until well in the night.

HUNTER TAKES OVERLAND CANOE TRIP

WHEN an Illinois pioneer suffered an attack of inflammatory rheumatism while on a hunting trip in 1827 and was unable to walk, he began to ride overland in his canoe.

After his friends had harnessed a horse to the canoe and placed him in it, he began the homeward journey from Kankakee Marsh to a trading post on the Iroquois River. He soon found the trip too taxing and passed a winter night outdoors until material for a litter was obtained.

PIONEERS KNEW LEGAL RIGHTS

A N early traveler in Illinois was impressed greatly by the interest that pioneers showed in law. In the course of his trips he noted that frequently people would resort to legal procedures even "on the most trifling occasions."

He cited an instance of this interest among the residents in the vicinity of English Prairie in 1821 and 1822, when law suits were started "for a piggin or pail, of the value of 25 cents."

TELLING EVIL SPIRITS TO KEEP ON THE MOVE

I F any one had prepared a handbook for architects in Illinois during pioneer times, he doubtless would have included much of the advice that was then common among home builders. Many persons believed that work on building a house should not be started on a Saturday if the owner wished to be spared constant trouble during its construction. Others held that a gate should not be built closer to a house than 15 feet in order to avoid bad luck.

For added protection, it was held that a horseshoe should be placed in the brick work of the chimney, so as to close every avenue of entrance to evil spirits.

SNAPPING TURTLES CATCH MANY FISH

I f Illinois waters are to yield really large fish, it seems that they will need more skillful fisher folk or hungrier snapping turtles. Experts in the "weights" of fish say that at least 50 pounds of fish can be taken from every acre of water, but actually only two pounds per acre can be credited to the 300,000 anglers who annually take out licenses to use hooks and lines.

Snapping turtles, it is said, do much better than that, but since they do not apply for licenses, exact figures cannot be stated. The State Natural History Survey has concluded that Illinois lakes and streams now have too many fish to produce large fish, since fish to grow large need plenty of elbow room.

POLITICAN'S WARDROBE PROVIDED

WHEN Illinois was a territory few luxuries were found, and indeed ordinary necessities were sometimes noticeably absent. An instance of this condition is related in connection with the wardrobe of a territorial legislator from Union county, who, after his election in 1811, was too poor to dress himself properly for his place among the lawmakers.

Kind hearted women of his constituency, however, found the answer to his problem. They made him a bob-tailed coat and a long pair of leggings in which he appeared during most of the legislative sessions.

MANY BICYCLES AID GOOD ROADS POLICY

POPULARITY of the bicycle in the "gay nineties" had a great deal to do with the improvement of Illinois highways. In 1892, the League of American Wheelmen asked the legislature to appropriate \$10,000,000 for the improvement of state highways. The attorney for the Wheelman stated that Springfield would be visited "in force" at the next session of the legislature, and that the cyclists would "do their best to interest the farmers who will derive the most benefit, to rally to the support of the measure."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

RECORDS PILE UP

I N 1820 when the government of Illinois was moved from Kaskaskia to Vandalia, a distance of about 100 miles, all the official records were carried in one small wagon that had been purchased for \$25.

This incident affords a striking contrast to the task of engineers who were laying plans for the new State Archives Building at Springfield in 1935. In order to care properly for the vast accumulation of documents they decided to sink caissons 35 feet to bed rock to support the weight of 6800-six drawer files with a capacity of 1,400,000 cubic feet of records.

SILENT WEDDING BELLS MEANT LOSS OF MONEY

A N Illinois historian has discovered that in territorial days the word of a bridegroom had to be as good as his bond, or else he lost \$500. An early law, it is said, required a bond of that amount from any man who had promised to marry, and if he failed to be present at the ceremony he forfeited the money. The same historian found that the bond had to be posted and the license secured three months before the announced wedding day.

PART THREE

FROM IRON RAILS TO FIRE DANCERS

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

IRON RAILS SCARE WOLVES

I N the early days of the development of Illinois any property owner who wished to keep wolves off his land had only to build a railroad around it. Farmers whose livestock had been harrassed by those animals learned to their surprise that the wolves were afraid to cross iron rails.

PATRICK HENRY GOVERNED ILLINOIS COUNTY

PATRICK HENRY, the famous statesman and orator of the American Revolution, for a time governed the Illinois area. However, his tenure of office began 40 years before Illinois became a state.

In 1778 the county of Illinois which included the territory now the states of Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Ohio, was organized and jurisdiction over it was the responsibility of Virginia. Since Patrick Henry was at that time Governor of Virginia, he also became the first governor of Illinois County.

A newspaper, some years ago, in pointing out the service of Patrick Henry to the state, observed that the original Illinois County was "probably the largest county ever organized.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

NO STREAMLINED STEERS

STREAMLINED steers met with but little approval from writers in Illinois agricultural journals 60 years ago. A survey of the best animals for fine meat favored those that were "built on the plan of a parallelogram," that is, the "rectangular type." This kind of construction, it is said, gave encouragement for hearty appetites that call for thick steaks.

DICKENS IN ILLINOIS

MUCH house painting during pioneer days in Illinois was done only when itinerant painters, who "ate their way through," came along.

Many houses in Belleville were reported by Charles Dickens on his visit there to have had "singularly bright doors of red and yellow, for the place had been lately visited by a traveling painter."

However, a chronicler of the times, maintains that the painter "had not yet eaten his way through, or to our town." It was "the old French village, at the foot of the bluffs," that Dickens should have mentioned in this connection, he contends.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

CHANGE FOR A DOLLAR

I N 1829 an Illinois traveler with \$1.00 in his possession received board and lodging during part of his journey because no one could change his money. He came down the river from Galena to Quincy in a skiff, and from there set out on foot for his home in Edwardsville. He traveled as far as Carrolton in Greene County before he found a person with enough money "to break" his dollar.

Another early traveler who had settled in Adams County in 1829 once related that he had made the round trip from Quincy to a point in Kentucky on 75 cents, "and didn't sponge or beg."

TREMBLING LANDS

W HEN Illinois soldiers in pursuit of Black Hawk, Chief of the Fox and Sauk Indians, entered the lake region between Dixon and Galena in 1832, it is said that they came upon "trembling lands," which quivered beneath the weight of a single man but were strong enough to support an army.

One historian points out that the turf, which was from six inches to a foot in thickness, rested upon water and beds of quicksand. In some places it was so thin that horses would fall through to the shoulder yet they were pulled out with but little difficulty.

RIVAL RIVER CAPTAINS

LESS than fifty years ago, Illinois persons desiring excitement characterized by gun display did not need to follow Horace Greeley's advice about going west. He could find it without much difficulty along the Illinois River as rival owners of boats attempted to reduce competition by marksmanship.

Fauds between river boat captains were not uncommon. On one occasion, for example, the captains of two rival boats made news in 1892 when the "placid waters between Peru and Peoria" resounded to rifle shots as a climax to disputes over river traffic.

FIRST JURIES

WHEN counties were first organized and courts established in northern Illinois, residents were so few that almost every settler was pressed into jury service. Sessions were usually both informal and brief.

An early chronicler relates that when the first circuit court of Putnam County convened in the home of a settler near the present site of Hennepin, nearly all the residents were on either the petit or the grand jury.

Court met for a single day and brought in only one indictment, which was for bigamy. The historian noted that "the jury regarded it unfair for a man to have two wives, while most of them were without any."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

BIRDS CAPTURE HOGS' FOOD

RESIDENTS in southern Illinois living along the highway between Albion and East St. Louis were confronted in 1822 by a most unusual hardship. Their hogs depended for food principally on acorns and berries during the days of late summer and fall. Suddenly a vast flock of pigeons flew into the area and soon cleared the fields of nearly all these items of food. As a result, many hogs died of starvation.

LANGUAGE LESSONS COSTLY

ACCORDING to the recollections of an early Illinois resident, any one in the state during the early years of its development who uttered an oath in the presence of a justice of the peace could be fined one dollar. However, if the offending person was sorry enough the fine might be remitted.

An early chronicler tells of an incident that happened in 1821 at Greenville in which a justice of the peace while walking with another justice of the peace is said to have uttered an oath.

Thereupon, it is related, he went immediately to his office to enter a fine against himself. Upon his return, he is reported to have remarked to his companion, "Having discovered proper signs of contrition, I am now considering the propriety of remitting the fine."

G R E A T D A Y S F O R O X E N

A S late as 75 years ago, Illinois mercantile and manufacturing houses depended largely on oxen for "transportation and transfer purposes." Oxen brought from \$100 to \$200 each on the open market, and some companies made a business of renting teams. In Quincy during 1872, they were hired, presumably for a day, at the "rate of seven dollars a yoke," one record showed.

P I O N E E R S G U A R D E D T I M B E R S U P P L Y

E A R L Y residents of Illinois who settled first on timbered lands, disliked cutting down their own trees so long as stands of timber still remained on non-resident or "speculators' lands."

For example, an early resident of Douglas County was said to have cut down in 1876 a large tree on his own land "in the exact spot where he had cut a similar one thirty-six years before."

A chronicler of the times, citing the incident, remarked that timber owned by residents "notwithstanding the large quantities used for fuel and improvement," held its own while other timber did not.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

NOT RIGHT BUT NEAR ENOUGH

MANY of the first settlers in Illinois felt so poorly educated that they believed any one from the East could teach in their schools better than local talent.

However, from Macon County comes the story of an "imported" teacher who proved this opinion to be an error. Having for two days attempted to solve a simple arithmetic problem, the schoolmaster at last informed his pupils that, "though the solution reached was not right, it was near enough right to do, and let it go at that."

PIRATES PREFER FLEEING

YEARS before Illinois became a state, pirates preyed on shipping along the Mississippi River. Historians relate that the marauders frequently hid in bluffs and fell upon freight and passenger boats to capture cargo and to terrify crews and travelers.

Stories are still told of bold forays from shores in the vicinity of Grand Tower in southern Illinois. Here ruffians had their way until vessels sent by the Spanish soon drove them out of the area.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

COMPLAINTS ABOUT COWS

T RAFFIC hazards that could not be regulated by ordinary "stop and go" methods presented difficulties to many Illinois communities during the early period of their development.

For some time herds of cattle being driven through the streets presented the greatest menace. Residents frequently complained that their lives were being endangered by the way "reckless herders" permitted animals to wander "hither and thither" as they moved along the highways.

ONE TRIP ENOUGH FOR EARLY BARGES

E ARLY Illinois barges were commonly either set adrift or sold as fuel after they carried their cargoes to markets at New Orleans because to bring them back upstream cost more than to build new ones.

Ordinary flat bottomed boats of 15 tons capacity could be purchased in those days for about \$100 according to one historical account. On the trip downstream they could be managed generally by a crew of three men, each of whom received close to \$100.

However, the return trip, even without cargo, generally required the services of six men. If the river was high it took about 25 days to go from New Orleans to Havana.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

NEWSPAPERS ON WALLS

IN many Illinois households during the early years of the state's history, newspapers played an important role in education, one historian has pointed out.

After being carefully read by the elders, the journals were saved until enough had been accumulated to cover the walls of a cabin. Then they were pasted up in the manner of wallpaper.

To them the children often turned during the long periods when weather kept them indoors, and with the help of their parents they not only learned the alphabet but advanced in their study of reading.

BIG DAYS FOR FORKED STICKS

SCARCELY a farming community in Illinois but has had, or still has, its well known "water witch," who, using a forked twig, determines the spot where well drillers should begin work.

A remarkable instance of "water witching" is related concerning Coles County in 1872, when the "witch" not only chose the exact spot for a well on the highest knoll between Charleston and Marshall, but even predicted that water would be found at a depth of 16 feet.

An eye-witness reporting to an agricultural journal said, "On digging to this depth, we found water sufficient for all the stock on any three farms in Coles County."

FLYING HAD A FUTURE

I N the opinion of many persons interested in aviation an Illinois man is largely responsible for creating the present day enthusiasm for flying. He was Captain Thomas B. Baldwin, who was born in Quincy in 1861, and he, it is said, held the first dirigible pilot's license as well as the second airplane pilot's license in the United States.

His amazing demonstrations of the possibilities of flying and his breath-taking parachute jumps during three sensational trips around the globe and at the St. Louis World's Fair awakened the minds of the public to the promise of high achievements for travel in the sky.

"WHAT'S IN A SOFA?"

T HAT the family sofa may accumulate a surprisingly varied assortment of articles over a period of years is established by the experience in 1890 of an Illinois upholsterer who was called upon to repair one of them.

According to a news item of the time, articles brought to light from between the back and the cushions of the old sofa included three mustache combs, four button hooks, 34 wads of chewing gum, ten suspender buttons, 27 cuff buttons, 217 pins, 13 needles, eight cigarettes, four photographs, 47 hairpins, 15 poker chips, six pocket knives, 28 matches, and some cloves.

A N A C C O U N T O F P R A I R I E F I R E

| N a detailed account of an Illinois prairie fire, an early resident of the state told of its progress being marked with a roar "like the voice of seven thunders" and clouds of smoke that obscured the sun.

Occasional whirlwinds traveled along the line of fire and tongues of flame cracked like the explosions of field artillery. Any effort to control it, except at the edges, were useless and it raged for seven miles until it reached the Spoon River.

During the early days of settlement, such fires were feared even more than in later times, since then help was far away and much hardship had to be endured before equipment could be replaced in farm and home.

MONEY AUCTIONS HELD

MONEY was sold at auction in Illinois and other midwestern states about fifty years ago, it is said, to meet the demands of speculators, who sought quick and large returns from their funds.

A newspaper reporter of the times told of money buyers who were willing to pay as high as 28 per cent for cash. Bidders not uncommonly vied for the control of large amounts, and auctions were described as "very spirited."

TROUBLE FOR ROAMING BUFFALO

BY 1892, the buffalo had passed out of the Illinois scene. Fences, by that time, enclosed nearly all farms, and roving animals were no longer the familiar objects they had been for decades.

A record of the period describes the efforts of a farmer near Quincy who tried to keep a pet buffalo within bounds. The animal showed a rather pleasant disposition while it was young, but with the passing of years a spirit of independence and daring took the place of docility. One day, after reaching a height of five feet, four inches, and a weight of 1400 pounds, it started in a hurry for no place in particular.

In time, the owner caught up with it, and the buffalo soon ceased roaming forever.

MUCH WORK BUT LITTLE MONEY

"A ROUGH country and short grub," was the terse description of Illinois in early times by a pioneer circuit rider preacher of Pope County. With courage equal to the hardships encountered, the circuit rider preacher told of riding on horseback for fourteen miles, conducting two services and then helping his host to beat the meal for the dinner bread. Later in the day, he traveled on several miles through a cypress swamp and preached again in the evening.

For the year's work, he received in cash \$62.50.

LETTERS IN POSTMASTER'S HAT

I N 1821, one Illinois community had a postmaster but no post-office. In that year the headquarters of mail for Montgomery County seems to have been in the hat of the postmaster. Each Saturday he traveled from Hillsboro to Greenville, about 20 miles, to pick up the mail, and as no official mail route had been designated in the area, he had to pay his expenses. In those days postage for a letter sent from Illinois to Boston or New York cost 25 cents.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

BUSY BADGERS AIDED LEAD PROSPECTORS

A WEED called "the devil's shoe-string" and the sharp-toothed badger aided Illinois lead miners in the vicinity of Galena during the boom years of 1827-29, according to the account of an early prospector.

He points out that the weed sometimes sank its roots in rock crevices 30 feet below the surface, and busy badgers burrowed far for those succulent morsels. Careful inspection of the earth around the entrances to their burrows sometimes revealed evidences of the prized Galena ore, the principal source of lead, and helped miners to find lucrative diggings.

BONNETS AND BLOSSOMS

IN pioneer days when ladies' hats were called bonnets, spring brought not only blossoms but sulphur fumes to many an Illinois community. A record of special interest to historians of the social scene on those early days calls attention to a little known industry of the time in which fumes mingled with balmy winds to make men catch their breath and comment volubly on the dictates of fashion.

The bonnets of those times ordinarily had to be rebuilt and bleached if they were to enhance the beauty of their owners for another season. This work was done in shops that used strong sulphur applications to achieve results. Fumes arising from the process brought forth many complaints from residents.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

GOOD ROADS HAMPERED

IN pioneer Illinois, labor was often difficult to find for any but the usual activities of settlement. An example of shortage of workers may be noted in the problem confronting commissioners of Jo Daviess County who had appointed an overseer for a 65-mile stretch of road on the Galena-Peoria highway. At that time only six cabins had been built along the route, with 15 or 20 miles between and but four men could be found to aid the overseer in maintaining and improving the road.

OX AS WATCH DOG

AN Illinois ox in the early days of settlement achieved a considerable local reputation as a watch dog. According to an account of the times, the animal developed an almost uncanny sense of the presence of Indians. It would roar and run even before they could be seen approaching.

In view of this peculiarity, its owner, a Bureau County pioneer, used it to aid the slumbers of his family and himself. At night, he put a bell around the neck of the ox and tethered the animal near the house, confident that if Indians came near, the animal would be aware and by jumping to its feet sound the alarm.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

PHANTOM RIDER AWES SPECTATORS

I N 1819 when one Illinois traveler reached his destination "apparently on nothing" he created a sensation. The scene of his journey was the Mississippi between Alton and St. Louis.

According to one account noted, the man constructed a raft of driftwood on which he set out, not reckoning with the muddy waters of the stream. Within a short time so much sediment had piled up on the raft that it sank, because of the weight, somewhat below the surface.

However, the traveler was undaunted. He remained on the raft with his head and shoulders above water. Onlookers from the river bank at St. Louis watched him approach shore in utter amazement, and could not believe the evidence of their eyes, until he came into shallow water and they were able to see the manner of his voyage.

BUSY DAYS FOR GOVERNOR

I T seems that early governors of Illinois received many requests from the electorate requesting attention to relatively unimportant matters. An example of this has been noted in an account of a demand made by the postmaster of a village, asking Governor Edwards, in 1825, to make a special point of watching the road near Vandalia. The object was to learn if the person who had contracted to carry the mail was performing his duty regularly.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

GREAT NOVELIST MAKES NEWS

I N 1842 when the English novelist, Charles Dickens, visited Illinois, few persons in the state knew of his presence. A record of the time shows that his stay in Belleville, St. Clair County, was unknown to the people of that section until the weekly newspaper of the community printed an account of the great author's visit.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES IMPORTANT

DURING the early development of many Illinois settlements, years often went by before residents secured professional services that are now commonly taken for granted in nearly every community. Records, for example, show that over a century passed in the life of Prairie du Pont, St. Clair County, before it had a local physician, a lawyer, and a post office. Later this village, the "meadow of the bridge," which is close to eight miles south of East St. Louis, became known as Dupon, the name that it bears today, a contraction of its original form.

Historical accounts also show the importance attached to the presence, in Albion, Edwards County, in 1822 of a surgeon who had practiced in a London hospital. It was sufficiently important at the time to gain comment in books that were written for the benefit of prospective English emigrants.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

FIRST ENGINE ARRIVES

I N the early days of Illinois when railroads were throwing lines across Illinois, the coming of the first locomotive was looked upon as an event of great importance. An example of this is found in an account of the engine that arrived at Belvidere after the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad had completed laying its rails through that community in 1853.

According to this account a student in the school not far from the tracks heard the whistle of the locomotive and ran out to view the wonder. The schoolmaster took up the chase and pursued the boy across the fields. The writer of the account comments that perhaps the teacher was "only too glad for an excuse to see the sight himself."

ANVIL EXPLOSION SHOWERS SPLINTERS

W HEN residents of one Illinois community celebrated Fourth of July, in 1855, an anvil played an important part in the festivities, but jeopardized the lives of a number of celebrants. A quantity of powder was placed under the anvil to send it high into the air. In this instance, however, the anvil split and portions fell among onlookers much as bomb splinters would do today. Fortunately, only one person was seriously injured, and strangely enough he was a physician.

MELODY MASTER HORRIFIED

W H E N a singing teacher in pioneer Illinois attempted to give lessons in the art of voice cultivation he found that his pupils appreciated volume of sound much more than they did its quality.

An early account tells of one New England singing master who attempted "to show how" by singing himself in a low, thin voice while beating time. When the young people were asked to sing they started in by drowning out his weak tones with their customary vigor.

The master was horrified but could not persuade his pupils to look upon his instructions with any degree of seriousness, and he gave up further attempts to secure from them results that harmonized with his artistic standards.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

LAND FOR A HOUSE

SOME early settlements in Illinois were founded by colonists who agreed to make certain improvements on the land assigned to them within a stated number of years after their arrival in the state. Each person in a colony that came to the area now known as Henry County bound himself to build a house to cost about \$200 within two years. In the event that he failed to do so, his land reverted to the colony, which paid for it at the rate of \$3.00 per acre.

HOGS RUN WILD

FOR a time early Illinois travelers in Bureau County and surrounding areas were startled to see wild hogs roaming the country-side. Historical records tell of hunters, who sometimes barely escaped with their lives, seeking the animals with guns and dogs.

To explain the appearance of these ferocious creatures, investigators have learned that in 1828 two Illinois drovers passing through Bureau County with a lot of hogs from McLean County lost a number of them. Within a few years these animals reverted to their natural wild state and terrorized the neighborhood in which they roamed.

When at last the hogs were hunted down and killed, the successful hunters were said to have cleared the country of "brutes which have been feared by the settlers as though they were tigers."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

NEW DANCE STEPS

WHEN changes in dance steps were made in the 1870s, some Illinois residents became skeptical of their success. One editorial writer announced in 1876, "There is a great change in dances, the galop has become a gliding waltz, and the waltz has become a brisk exercise, a cross between the movement of logs induced by colic and hop-scotch set to music."

The same writer concluded his comments by noting that the polka was in high favor and that the minuet was to be danced at all balls and parties the following winter.

PLENTY OF COMPANY FOR PIONEER TEACHER

RECORDS of pioneer days in Illinois are filled with accounts of the self-sacrifice shown by early school teachers, many of whom came into unsettled areas directly from the East. One schoolmaster after walking from Pekin to Blooming Grove in Hancock County opened a school in a log building with "no floor, no door, and cracks all around." He obtained board and lodging with a nearby settler for 37¢ a week. Although the settler's home was considered to be the best in the neighborhood, it housed not only the owner, his wife, and ten children, but also three dogs and two cats.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

TIMBER AND WILD GRASS

PATIENCE and persistence mark the life of Illinois pioneers, and perhaps nowhere is there more impressive proof of this than in the gradual development of their land holdings. When one family of early settlers came to the open country of Sangamon County they found an abundance of timber and great stretches of prairie land, covered with tall tough grass.

At first they began to clear the timber and then they fenced in their prairie land. Bit by bit the sod was turned and the sun scorched the roots of the wiry grass. By the following year the land could be cultivated much more easily.

Like other early groups of settlers this family was uneasy until it had cleared a considerable area of the prairie soil, since pioneers seem to have felt from the very first days in the new land that their timber holdings would soon be exhausted. Another cause of fear may have been their uncertainty that the timber would escape destruction by the frequent prairie fires.

HORSE TROUGHS

A CENTURY ago a serious traffic problem in many Illinois cities was keeping in repair numerous horse troughs within corporate lines. Only a short time passed, however, before the problem had changed to regulating the parking of automobiles so that horses could get near enough to the troughs to get a drink.

A few years ago some newspaper writers were asking that a few troughs, as well as hitching posts, which were rapidly disappearing in many Illinois communities, be preserved as objects of historical interest.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

GAS AND TIRES INDEXES TO FAME

SOME years ago one Illinois county became widely known because it was said to be the only region in the state "where the tillers of the soil have automobiles." Whiteside County gained this distinction partly because of its wide expanse of fertile land. However, its agricultural riches have been supplemented by various manufacturing communities below the Rock River where water power is abundant. One of its prosperous river cities, Fulton, was named in honor of the famous inventor and engineer of steamboat fame.

COWS GET WHITEWASH FOR SALT

TOWN cows in Illinois pioneer communities found a tasty morsel conveniently placed for them on stores and public buildings. In the days when not only cows but other inhabitants of field and barnyard wandered at will throughout Illinois settlements, cows in search for salt discovered that whitewash used on some buildings contained this much desired seasoning, and they eagerly began to lick the structures for it.

According to an historical account, lapping cows sometimes made so much noise that public gatherings were interrupted, and boys were commissioned to stand outside to keep the animals at a respectful distance.

HORSES AND OXEN HAUL ENGINE

A CHAPTER in the history of transportation in Illinois has for its setting the area between Springfield and Meredosia in Morgan County. Here a railroad, called the "Northern Cross," was constructed to connect these two important points. The engine, manufactured in Pittsburgh, was shipped by water, and hauled up the bank of the Illinois River at Meredosia by many oxen and horses.

An historian has pointed out that nearly all the available animals in the vicinity "were required to pull the huge iron thing up the banks of the river, and scores of men in like activity worked about it to place it on the rails." Governor Duncan, as well as Stephen A. Douglas, were among the notable persons present.

Notwithstanding the construction cost of \$1,850,000 and persistent efforts to make the line pay, after a few years it was auctioned for \$21,000.

EARLY SHERIFFS BUSY

B EFORE 1818 when Illinois was a territory, taxes were relatively light. However, money was scarce and great difficulty was experienced by the authorities in making collections. According to early historical records, the total revenue put on the books for the territory during 1812-1814 was \$4,875. However one half of this sum finally had to be given to the sheriff for collection as delinquent taxes,

ILLINOIS BROOM CORN

○NE of the famous broom-corn areas of the world lies in east central Illinois, covering approximately the counties of Coles, Cumberland, Moultrie, Shelby, Jasper, and part of Sangamon. The principal marketing point for this important area, Mattoon, lies in the heart of the region where live stock, as well as commercial corn and small grains is marketed.

Standard varieties of broom corn grown here reach a height of seven to fifteen feet. At harvest time, the great "brushes" at the top, sixteen to twenty-four inches long, are cut off, stored for drying and shrinking, and then packed in bales for shipment.

Since broom corn production is a branch of farming that has not been largely mechanized, many workmen are required. An experienced laborer can harvest, it is said, about three fifths of an acre in one day.

PIGEONS, POULTRY, AND PETS

W HEN Illinois bird fanciers flocked to Bloomington in January, 1895, for the "big poultry show," they saw nearly a thousand birds on exhibition. According to a contemporary account, the event was "the first annual exhibition of the Illinois Poultry, Pigeon, and Pet Stock Association."

In the oddities section several exhibits caused visitors to marvel. Among them, it is said, were a live chicken with one head, two bodies and four legs; a Cornish Indian game cockerel that weighed over nine pounds; and a turkey that tipped the scales at 45 pounds.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

HORSE AND CARRIAGE ERA

I N the days before automobiles were common, many Illinois residents rented "a horse and rig" by the hour. Not uncommonly a whole family would have a grand time seeing the countryside or driving around town.

In the 1880s, accounts show, Illinois law-makers decided that all hired vehicles must bear license numbers and lights. Thereupon, a storm of protest arose from persons who found themselves embarrassed by the new ruling, because they were then unable to hide the fact that the carriages in which they rode were hired, and not owned by themselves.

However, numbering of the vehicles continued although epithets, such as "vulgar" were used to denounce the new ruling.

NAMES FOR QUILT PATTERNS

"LOG cabin," "Double Tulip," "Garden Wreath," "Rob Peter To Pay Paul," and "Joseph's Coat," may seem to be names of novels but to Illinois students of history, they simply refer to quilt patterns used in early communities of the state.

These pioneer designs were frequently finished during merry afternoons when the women of a locality met to sew and quilt. In some instances the number of separate pieces used for a pattern ran into the hundreds. They were often woven out of wool from sheep raised in the immediate neighborhood.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

CREDIT POLICY CURED

PIONEER Illinois residents in and near Macon County are said to have brought with them the southern custom of doing business on credit. For a while this practice resulted in good for all concerned, but the time came when "wholesale credit was considered to have had its day."

According to an early historical account, as soon as there was a fringe of settlement in the heavily timbered area, a tradesman with a span of spanking horses and a "two-story wagon" stopped at the houses. There he loaded beeswax, furs, live chickens, and other home products, taking them all on credit. He agreed to sell them in St. Louis and to pay for them upon his return either in cash or in sugar, tea, coffee, spices, and other products to be found in centers of population.

All seems to have gone along well until a drove of hogs, on one occasion, was assembled and, as had been the custom, driven away on credit. In time the drover returned but, it is said, unfortunately brought with him neither money nor goods. This experience, one historian reports, taught the settlers to avoid the wide-open credit policy.

HAILSTONES WERE LARGE

WEATHER-MINDED Illinois residents have recently recalled an unusual April day in 1910. Records show that southern Illinois was then hit by a storm which brought hailstones as large as croquet balls. It is declared, indeed, that one of them hit a cookstove and cracked the top of it. One editor reporting the incident asserted "this is absolutely true,"

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

POPULAR NAMES OF OTHER DAYS

SOME given names of Illinois people seem to have been affected by changing times. Examination of marriage records, it is said, show that today few instances may be found of names, such as Decy, Holly, Amanda, Charity, and Jemima--all fine names for fine folk and popular in pioneer days.

PARKING PROBLEM OLD HEADACHE

PARKING the family car on Main Street or around the court house square in any county seat town of Illinois today is somewhat of a problem, but if the motorist has trouble in finding an empty stall for his machine, he may console himself by learning that less than 40 years ago the drivers of horse drawn rigs sometimes experienced the same difficulties. In other words, there was not always room for "old dobbin" and the carriage or wagon.

As late as 1906 a Montgomery County newspaper was calling attention to the lack of adequate hitching facilities for the farmers' horses. The courthouse square in Hillsboro was crowded with teams, and the hitching racks in the rear of store buildings were in need of a general overhauling. In fact, the newspaper editor went so far as to issue a warning by saying, "If we want the farmers' trade we must provide for their accommodation with better places to tie."

INDIAN TRADERS

EXPERTS in archeological research who have made a study of Indian customs in Illinois are of the opinion that aboriginal inhabitants of this area were not only great warriors, but also thrifty merchants, so to speak.

Records show that many an Indian probably found time to earn an honest bead or two through trade as well as to sharpen battle-axes. Excavations in Massac and Pope Counties have revealed fluoride beads, Galena ore, and copper. The last two items are of special interest since there are no copper mines near these areas.

In Fulton County, it is said that evidence of trading among Indians was indicated also by the presence of mica pipe-stone, marine shells, and a considerable number of copper objects. Some scholars surmise that not all of this metal was brought down by the glaciers, but that a part of it was carried into the region.

WINDLASS AIDS MOTHER

ABOUT 50 years ago one Illinois mother devised a unique way to bathe babies. The inventor lived in a home built on supporting timbers over the open water. A hole was sawed through the porch floor, large enough to permit a mesh basket to be lowered by a windlass. Into the basket went the baby, and the mother at the handle lowered her infant through the porch floor and into the stream.

There the child splashed around to its heart's content until the mother turned the handle in the opposite direction to haul up the baby to the floor level. An account of the time shows that neighbors thought the mother was very ingenious, but it did not record that the invention ever became generally popular.

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

COACHMEN ONCE "PERFECT WHIPS"

RULES of etiquette for the "perfect whip," now called a coachman, were so important in the 1880s that Illinois newspapers of the period gave considerable space to the subject.

One account emphasized that a first class driver should always be seated upright, head erect, and eyes well to the front.

He was further advised not to "sit up, like a 'pig in a rage,'" and not to bend over the foot-board. A special caution was given for rainy weather: "Never omit to have a pair of worsted gloves about the coach to put on in the case of rain; they are the only things through which the reins do not slip."

FANCY NAME GIVEN TO FEATS OF FAIR DIVERS

LADIES "throwing somersaults" made the news in Illinois 62 years ago, when a very early, if not the first women's prize swimming exhibition in the state was held. A reporter of the event described it as "novel and exciting."

First, the participants swam from one end of the pool to the other. "After this," the account continued, "came the diving, jumping, and throwing somersaults from the springboards." Whether the officials judged the fancy diving under the name, "throwing somersaults," is not stated, but they were particularly impressed by "the graceful movements and speed of each fair swimmer."

Illinois Historical Anecdotes

GOOD BEHAVIOR

In the summer of 1831 when one early Illinois court was called into session, the judge, it seems, had nothing to do but make a speech complimenting the county on its moral character.

The court convened at Ottawa beneath a tree on the south side of the river. Grand jurors brought in no indictments, and the petit jury, having nothing to consider, did not even meet. No trials were held. In view of these circumstances, says a local historian, the judge simply made a speech.

In common with many other sections of the state, courts in these days frequently served only a small number of persons because the country was thinly settled. In 1831, Ottawa is said to have had but three houses, and only one house could be found between that community and Joliet.

FIRE DANCERS MOVED FAST

AMONG the unusual early customs in Illinois, perhaps none is more picturesque than a famous Spanish dance, which is still performed regularly, it is said, in the village of Beckemeyer, Clinton County. According to one account, a lighted object was attached to the clothing of the dancer, and unless his movements were sufficiently rapid to snuff out the blaze, serious consequences might have followed. So far, however, no casualties have been reported.





3 1711 00092 7546